United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/20

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by International Council of Women, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, National Council of Women of the United States, Soroptimist International of Greece, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations and American Psychological Association, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65088 (E) 241209

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Statement

1. We, the international and national non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, are committed to promoting the advancement of women and their quality of life through their empowerment, throughout their lives. Since Beijing Plus 10, it has generally been agreed that the Beijing Platform for Action has been left behind with more attention being given to the Millennium Development Goals. The Goals indisputably have their value; however, at this time, we believe that more attention must be given to women's issues because they are last on the list in every area. Women still have an excessive burden of work, compared to men. They are excluded from progress in determining policy and stereotyped in the role of domestic work. Fifteen years after the Beijing Platform for Action, women are still discriminated against and are still victims of violence.

2. We urge the promotion of planned gender mainstreaming and gender strategy in all policies and programmes. We must strengthen legal frameworks. It is essential to ensure women's economic empowerment and increase their access to and control over resources. Women must be given access to knowledge, especially the practical type that can mean the difference between life and death to their families, such as learning how to combat malaria, make compost, obtain better nutrition and swim. This knowledge will help them to protect themselves and their families in their day-to-day battles, in times of crisis and in natural disasters.

3. Now, more than ever, women are recognized as the cornerstone of our societies. Therefore, it behooves Governments, development agencies and communities to support them and to ensure that their needs are met, in order to elevate the overall human condition. We support the sustainable improvement of women's position and quality of life and the realization of justice and gender equality at the national, regional and international levels. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has done much to draw the world's attention to the importance of uplifting women in our society and guaranteeing them equal access to their basic human rights; however, much remains to be done. In 2010, the fifteenth anniversary of the Declaration, let us renew our commitment to women and reconfirm our belief that they are fully entitled to all the benefits of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.